

# Prescribed Burning for Wildlife

## *Job Sheet*

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)  
University Outreach and Extension – The School of Natural Resources

### WHY USE PRESCRIBED BURNING FOR WILDLIFE?

**PURPOSE:** Prescribed burning is applying a controlled fire to a predetermined area as a habitat management tool. It improves wildlife habitat by setting back the successional stage of an area, controlling undesirable vegetation and reducing wildfire hazards.



### SPECIFICATIONS:

- Prior to burn, develop a written burn plan to outline the burn job requirements.
- Burns should be conducted under the supervision of a qualified and trained individual.
- Burning should be managed with consideration for wildlife needs such as nesting and feeding cover.
- Fall and winter burns generally favor the forb component in mixed stands, and helps improve plant structure and diversity for wildlife habitat.
- Burning in spring and fall of the same year greatly reduces stands of cool-season grasses, including tall fescue.
- For greatest wildlife benefit native warm season grass should be burned between August 15 and March 15. Cool season grasses should be burned between March 15 and May 1.
- Burn the area on a three-to-five year cycle to control woody encroachment. When burning to control undesirable sprouting woody vegetation, it may be necessary to burn two or more consecutive years.
- Patch burning can be used in conjunction with livestock grazing to provide both improved grazing and wildlife cover. Burning up to 1/3 of each pasture or paddock each year has been shown to double grassland bird populations.

### MAINTENANCE:

- Burn approximately one-third of the managed area annually. Strips or blocks may be left unburned within the burned area to provide a continuous source of cover and nesting habitat.
- Maintain mowed/plowed permanent firebreaks according to the burn plan.

### PRIMARY HABITAT CONSIDERATIONS:

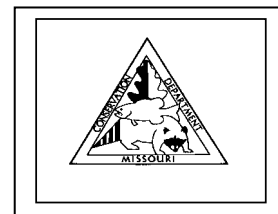
- Provide nesting and brood habitat for quail, turkey and other ground nesting wildlife.
- Provide natural food and cover for rabbits, deer, quail, and turkeys.

Consult with NRCS or MDC wildlife biologists and private land conservationists, or University Extension for additional recommendations.

## This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

**CONTACT:**

---



**NRCS/MDC/UMC  
Missouri**